

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

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CHAUNCY WESTWOOD,

Plaintiff,

COMPLAINT

-against-

JURY TRIAL
DEMANDED

THE CITY OF NEW YORK,
DETECTIVE RAFAEL TATIS (TAX 947951),
and JOHN DOE,

Defendants.

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Plaintiff, CHAUNCY WESTWOOD, by and through his attorneys, **THE LAW OFFICES OF MICHAEL S. LAMONSOFF, PLLC**, as and for his Complaint, respectfully alleges, upon information and belief:

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

1. Plaintiff brings this action for compensatory damages, punitive damages and attorney's fees pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and 42 U.S.C. § 1988 for violations of his civil rights, as said rights are secured by said statutes and the Constitution of the United States of America.

JURISDICTION

2. This action is brought pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and 42 U.S.C. § 1988, and the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution.

3. Jurisdiction is founded upon 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331, 1343, and 1367.

VENUE

4. Venue is properly laid in the Southern District of New York under U.S.C. § 1331(b), in that this is the District in which the claim arose.

JURY DEMAND

5. Plaintiff respectfully demands a trial by jury of all issues in this matter pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 38(b).

PARTIES

6. Plaintiff, CHAUNCY WESTWOOD, is, and has been, at all relevant times, a resident of the City and State of New York.
7. Defendant, THE CITY OF NEW YORK, was and is a municipal corporation duly organized and existing under and by virtue of the laws of the State of New York.
8. Defendant, THE CITY OF NEW YORK, maintains the New York City Police Department, a duly authorized public authority and/or police department, authorized to perform all functions of a police department as per the applicable sections of the New York State Criminal Procedure Law, acting under the direction and supervision of the aforementioned municipal corporation, THE CITY OF NEW YORK.
9. At all times hereinafter mentioned, the individually named Defendant, DETECTIVE RAFAEL TATIS (TAX 947951), was a duly sworn member of said department assigned to Narcotics Borough Manhattan South, and was acting under the supervision of said department and according to his official duties.
10. At all times hereinafter mentioned the defendants, either personally or through their employees, were acting under color of state law and/or in compliance with the official rules, regulations, laws, statutes, customs, usages and/or practices of the State or CITY OF NEW

YORK.

11. Each and all of the acts of the defendants alleged herein were done by said defendants while acting within the scope of their employment by defendant, THE CITY OF NEW YORK.
12. Each and all of the acts of the defendants alleged herein were done by said defendants while acting in furtherance of their employment by defendant, THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

FACTS

13. On December 4, 2015, at approximately 8:00 p.m., plaintiff CHAUNCY WESTWOOD was lawfully present at or near the intersection of 46th Street and Broadway, in the County, City, and State of New York.
14. At that time and place, the Defendants arrived on duty.
15. The Defendants approached Plaintiff and searched him.
16. Plaintiff was not engaged in any suspicious or illegal activity.
17. There was no reasonable basis for the Defendants to approach and search Plaintiff.
18. The search revealed no evidence of any guns, drugs or contraband.
19. Plaintiff was not engaged in any suspicious, illegal, violent, or threatening behavior.
20. Despite the absence of any wrongdoing on the part of the Plaintiff, Defendants placed the Plaintiff in handcuffs and formally arrested him.
21. At no time on December 4, 2015 did Plaintiff commit any crime or violation of law.
22. At no time on December 4, 2015 did Defendants possess probable cause to arrest Plaintiff or to order Plaintiff's arrest.
23. At no time on December 4, 2015 did Defendants possess information that would lead a reasonable officer to believe probable cause existed to arrest Plaintiff.
24. Nevertheless, Defendants thereafter transported Plaintiff to the stationhouse of a local area

precinct.

25. Plaintiff was held for several hours at the stationhouse before he was transported to New York County Central Booking where he was held for several hours pursuant to false allegations made by the Defendants.
26. Plaintiff was eventually summarily released from New York County Central Booking without explanation and without seeing a judge when the district attorney declined to prosecute Plaintiff.
27. The Defendants provided knowingly false and misleading information to prosecutors at the New York County District Attorney's Office.
28. As a result of the foregoing, Plaintiff CHAUNCY WESTWOOD sustained, *inter alia*, mental anguish, shock, fright, apprehension, embarrassment, humiliation, and deprivation of his constitutional rights.
29. All of the aforementioned acts of Defendants, their agents, servants and employees, were carried out under the color of state law.
30. All of the aforementioned acts deprived Plaintiff of the rights, privileges and immunities guaranteed to citizens of the United States by the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution of the United States of America, and were therefore in violation of 42 U.S.C. Section 1983.
31. The acts complained of were carried out by the aforementioned individual Defendants in their capacities as police officers with all the actual and/or apparent authority attendant thereto.
32. The acts complained of were carried out by the aforementioned individual Defendants in their capacities as police officers, pursuant to the customs, usages, practices, procedures,

and rules of THE CITY OF NEW YORK and the New York City Police Department, all under the supervision of ranking officers of said department.

33. Defendants, collectively and individually, while acting under color of state law, engaged in conduct which constituted custom, usage, practice, procedure or rule of respective municipality/authority, which is forbidden by the Constitution of the United States.

**FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF FOR
FALSE ARREST UNDER 42 U.S.C. § 1983**

34. Plaintiff CHAUNCY WESTWOOD repeats, reiterates, and realleges each and every allegation set forth above with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein and at length.
35. As a result of the Defendants' conduct, Plaintiff was subjected to illegal, improper and false arrest, taken into custody, and caused to be falsely imprisoned, detained, and confined without any probable cause, privilege, or consent.
36. As a result of the foregoing, Plaintiff's liberty was restricted, he was put in fear for his safety, and he was falsely arrested without probable cause.

**SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF
FOR MUNICIPAL LIABILITY UNDER 42 U.S.C. § 1983**

37. Plaintiff, repeats, reiterates, and realleges each and every allegation set forth above with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein and at length.
38. Defendants arrested, searched, and incarcerated plaintiff CHAUNCY WESTWOOD, in the absence of any evidence of criminal wrongdoing, notwithstanding their knowledge that said search, arrest and incarceration would jeopardize Plaintiff's liberty, well-being, safety, and violate their constitutional rights.

39. The acts complained of were carried out by the aforementioned individual Defendants in their capacities as police officers and officials, with all the actual and/or apparent authority attendant thereto.
40. The acts complained of were carried out by the aforementioned individual Defendants in their capacities as police officers and officials pursuant to the customs, policies, usages, practices, procedures, and rules of THE CITY OF NEW YORK and the New York City Police Department, all under the supervision of ranking officers of said department.
41. Those customs, policies, patterns, and practices include, but are not limited to:
 - i. requiring officers to make a predetermined number of arrests and/or issue a predetermined number of summonses within a predetermined time frame;
 - ii. requiring precincts to record a predetermined number of arrests and/or issue a predetermined number of summonses within a predetermined time frame;
 - iii. failing to take any measures to correct unconstitutional behavior when brought to the attention of supervisors and/or policy makers;
 - iv. failing to properly train police officers in the requirements of the United States Constitution.
42. The aforesaid customs, policies, usages, practices, procedures and rules of THE CITY OF NEW YORK and the New York City Police Department directly cause, *inter alia*, the following unconstitutional practices:
 - i. arresting individuals regardless of probable cause in order to inflate the officer's arrest statistics;
 - ii. arresting individuals regardless of probable cause in order to positively affect precinct-wide statistics;
 - iii. falsifying evidence and testimony to support those arrests;
 - iv. falsifying evidence and testimony to cover up police misconduct.

43. The foregoing customs, policies, usages, practices, procedures and rules of THE CITY OF NEW YORK and the New York City Police Department constitute a deliberate indifference to the safety, well-being and constitutional rights of Plaintiff, CHAUNCY WESTWOOD.
44. The foregoing customs, policies, usages, practices, procedures and rules of THE CITY OF NEW YORK and the New York City Police Department were the direct and proximate cause of the constitutional violations suffered by Plaintiff as alleged herein.
45. The foregoing customs, policies, usages, practices, procedures and rules of THE CITY OF NEW YORK and the New York City Police Department were the moving force behind the constitutional violations suffered by Plaintiff as alleged herein.
46. As a result of the foregoing customs, policies, usages, practices, procedures and rules of THE CITY OF NEW YORK and the New York City Police Department, Plaintiff was placed under arrest unlawfully.
47. Defendants, collectively and individually, while acting under color of state law, were directly and actively involved in violating the constitutional rights of Plaintiff.
48. Defendants, collectively and individually, while acting under color of state law, acquiesced in a pattern of unconstitutional conduct by subordinate police officers, and were directly responsible for the violation of Plaintiff's constitutional rights.
49. All of the foregoing acts by defendants deprived Plaintiff of federally protected constitutional rights, particularly their Fourth and Fourteenth Amendment rights to be free from unreasonable search and seizure.

WHEREFORE, the Plaintiff respectfully requests judgment against Defendants on each of the foregoing causes of action as follows:

- i. an order awarding compensatory damages in an amount to be determined at trial;
- ii. an order awarding punitive damages in an amount to be determined at trial;
- iii. reasonable attorneys' fees and costs under 42 U.S.C. §1988; and
- iv. directing such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper, together with attorneys' fees, interest, costs and disbursements of this action.

Dated: New York, New York
February 28, 2017

Respectfully submitted,

**LAW OFFICES OF MICHAEL S.
LAMONSOFF, PLLC**
Counsel for the Plaintiff

/s/

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